

i'm a forever (girl) by pally (palliris)

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Summary:

Steve talks about life and love with Dustin.

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Author's Note:

whoops sorry ive been away !! (doin' college tour stuff and 5k runs, plus filmin' smth for animation class lmao) but here's the next part !!

Things really start to go downhill while he's out eating ice cream with Dustin, people-watching those that are going into the movie theater. Dustin keeps pointing out the kids with auburn hair or dark skin, so Steve has a pretty good idea where his mind is. Though Steve keeps pointing out mousy blondes, himself, so he can't really talk.

"Has your type changed?" Dustin asks, after Steve's pointed out a woman with wrinkles that's clutching a purse, but has coppery, yellow locks. "Because I always thought it was just Nancy. Or brunettes in general."

Steve looks away from the congregation of people and down to Dustin and says, "Me too." He takes a moment drum his fingers on the metal countertop. It's cold against his skin, like a jolt. "Things change, kiddo."

"But like. Nancy's *forever*. And you just gave her up."

"That's not really what happened," Steve says, and it's mostly true. Still hurts like a bitch, though.

"You could've had, like, so much and you just. Walked away from her."

"Dustin-"

"And if you had just put in more effort to woo her, you might've been able to *keep* her."

There's just so many levels of wrong in that statement Steve can't help but sigh. He really thought he had taught the kid a bit better than that.

“Remember; you don’t keep people. That’s, like, gross. And really bad.” Picking up his spoon and scooping up some mint-green onto his spoon, Steve gives Dustin a look. Like, the kind of look that makes the kid wither in his seat in a way his mom could never achieve. “And it was never just about Nancy.”

“But then what else *was* it about?”

And Steve’s never been able to shut his stupid, goddamn mouth, so he blurts out, “Nancy *and* Jonathan.” Sure, yeah, putting it out there makes something ease off of his chest, just a bit, but another one settles down, practically crushing him, so he doesn’t look at Dustin. A super large part of him hopes the kid doesn’t take his words the way he means them; hopes he understands what he’s getting at.

Dustin’s a smart kid. Steve’s thankful. Steve’s rueful.

When he looks back at the kid, his eyes have gone small, but intense. He can practically hear Dustin’s thoughts going a mile a minute. If there was anyone he actually cared about to know this kind of thing, it would certainly have been the boy who had become his pseudo-kid.

The silence is unnerving. Especially since the cinema is slowly declining as it draws nearer to the starting time of the movie. Steve finishes off his ice cream because he needs to have something to do with his hands, lest they fidget restlessly towards his neck.

There’s a weight there, small and warm metal that loops around his neck, with the main centerpiece slid onto it and hanging next to his heart.

When Dustin still hasn’t spoken, Steve just-

He gives in.

Reaching up and unzipping the top of his leather jacket, he reaches a cold hand into the space between his shirt and his body. There’s a moment where he hesitates, right when his fingers are clasped around it, but then he pitches forward and lets it slide forward, into his hand and off of his body.

It dangles in front of his face, suspended by a faux-gold chain and glinting in the artificial light around them. It's not only his own promise, but his partner's, as well. Something that says *I'm here and I know you hate this sort of thing, but we'll get there together and I love you.*

If he wanted to get really damn philosophical or whatever, he'd say that it was the physical manifestation of everything he never knew he needed, but he's not about that. Or, wasn't before.

“Who is it from?” Dustin asks quietly, and Steve startles minutely. Swallowing and setting the ring and necklace down on the metal table and listening to the clanging noise it makes, Steve looks back up at him.

There's a small second where he wants to get up and go away; leave it all here for Dustin to fiddle and wonder at, the words, the thoughts, the feelings, but-

“It's Billy's. Well, technically, it was his mom's. The, uh, one who passed. It's our,” Steve starts slowly, gesturing at it and not really able to form the words he needs to. “Our...” *hearts? Fond memories? Our soul? Just a piece of silver and what the fuck else is in stupid rings?* “It's important.”

He settles on that, because there's nothing that can really, truly describe what this, this *thing*, between him and Billy is. A product of frustration and lust and affection and a fuck ton of other things that just hit Steve like a train, things he can't formulate the sentences to describe.

Dustin looks away from him, then, and looks down at the necklace. His hand shakes on the table, like he wants to touch it, so Steve just pushes it closer to the kid in an attempt to get the message across.

Steve doesn't know how to speak; he's fucking shit at it. What he *can* do is *show him*.

Putting his finger against the chain and looking back up at him, Dustin watches Steve nod at him. The kid turns it over in his hand a few times, thumb rubbing the still-warm metal with almost a sort of

reverence he didn't know the kid was capable of having.

It's kind of weird in a good sort of way. Having the kid look over and fiddle with what's essentially his heart on a fucking plate. He trusts Dustin not to hurt it.

“...so you’re his forever girl?” he asks eventually, nose scrunching up and the corner of his lip twitching.

“Pretty much,” Steve answers, and laughs. The sound makes Dustin look up again. “Trust me, kid, it definitely wasn’t planned out like this. You see, if you ever have a plan going in, that’s not going to be where you end up in fifteen, twenty years. When you get to where you’re supposed to be, there shouldn’t be a plan. You’ll just *know*.”

“Oh yeah? And how long did it take you to know that you were going to be stuck with bastard Billy for the rest of your life?”

Steve laughs again, “A long damn time, Dustin. But don’t worry; it’ll still be me and you against the world.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. Now come on- I’m freezin’ my ass off out here.”

“But I haven’t finished my ice cream!” Dustin pouts, waving his hand in the air as Steve picks up the necklace and loops it back over his neck. It fits against his skin perfectly, just like he knows it will. “That’s, like, more important than your behind.”

“Yeah, yeah, sure; whatever you say, kid. Just know I’m leaving you behind,” Steve pokes in Dustin’s direction, who starts shoving the rest of his vanilla ice cream down his throat, even though he knows that Steve would never actually leave him. “C’mon, we’re goin’ to my house.”

“That creepy old place? Ugh.”

(And yeah, it’s fucking *nice* to be able to introduce his partner and his kid to each other as such, and the look on Billy’s face when he comes in with the boy clutching his coat and waving a small, plastic ice cream spoon in front of him like it’ll ward off ghosts is fucking

hilarious and wonderful and *god* he's in love with his life, and the people in it.)

Author's Note:

if anyone wants to see the put a ring on it fic that probably precedes this one i could write it ?? idk lmao